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NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service Weekly Statewide Influenza Activity Summary

Week Ending January 6, 2006

Influenza level of activity: "SPORADIC ACTIVITY"

From September 20, 2005, to date, 606 unique clinical specimens have been tested by the New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratory and NJ clinical laboratories participating in the World Health Organization and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System*. What follows is a summary of culture-confirmed cases of influenza identified through testing performed by these laboratories for the week ending January 6, 2006:

- Number of influenza A culture confirmed cases: One
- Number of influenza B culture confirmed cases: One

This is the fifteenth week of the 2005-06 influenza season in New Jersey. The NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service has not been notified of any influenza outbreak or increased activity in any health care facilities, nursing homes or schools throughout the state.

This week, rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) from nursing homes and emergency department visits are 1.45% and 4.36% respectively. The rate for school absenteeism showed a slight increase 7.07%, although the rate is comparable with the same period last season.

Hospital laboratory surveillance for respiratory syncytial virus (often clinically indistinguishable from influenza virus infection) continues to show increases in the number of tests performed and the number of positives. We expect a steady increase in both numbers as we move further into the season.

A few of the county percentage parameters showed figures well above the total average (see 03Jan.06pdf Table) but should not be interpreted as an increased level of activity since the denominator of reporting entities is very small.

From the analysis of all data collected this week from the ILI surveillance system, the level of influenza activity in the state of New Jersey remains at a level of

“SPORADIC ACTIVITY”. This level of activity is comparable with the same period last season.

According to the CDC’s latest influenza weekly activity level report for week 51 (December 18 – December 24, 2005), influenza activity continued to increase in the western United States. Four states reported widespread influenza activity; 4 states reported regional influenza activity; 5 states reported local influenza activity; 31 states, including New Jersey and New York City reported sporadic influenza activity; while 5 states and the District of Columbia reported no influenza activity.

Influenza virus infection itself is not a clinical or laboratory reportable disease in New Jersey according to N.J.A.C. 8:57-1. Accordingly, activity levels must be extrapolated from weekly monitoring activities of healthcare facilities and providers dispersed around the state.

Avian flu WHO update:

The Ministry of Health in Turkey has confirmed its first two cases of human infection with Avian influenza A caused by the H5N1 virus subtype. Both cases were fatal. The first case was a 14-year-old boy from the rural district of Dogubayazit, in the eastern province of Agri, which borders the Islamic Republic of Iran and Armenia. The second case was his 15-year-old sister. These cases mark the first confirmed reports of human infection with Avian influenza A outside East Asia. To date, the cumulative number of confirmed human cases of Avian influenza A/(H5N1) reported to WHO stands at 144 including 76 deaths. WHO reports only laboratory-confirmed cases. For more information go to: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

*The laboratories conduct testing of pre-season isolates and the first isolates of the season. These isolates can provide information regarding circulating strains and information necessary for the vaccine formulation for the following year’s flu season. Also test results from representative samples collected during peak influenza activity late in the season, and after a major influenza outbreak, may identify new variants that are just beginning to circulate in the community, helping to inform vaccine formulations for the following year.

References and Resources:

- To obtain previous ILI reports: <http://nj.gov/health/fluinfo/index.html>
- <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/preventflu.shtml>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/>